

Assemblyman **PAUL KORETZ**

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Introduces Bill to Prohibit Declawing of Cats *AB 395 will ban the inhumane surgical procedure*

(Sacramento) – Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) introduced legislation today that will prohibit veterinarians from declawing cats. Koretz, a well-known leader in efforts to protect animal welfare, is from the City of West Hollywood, where the City Council, at the request of Councilman John Duran, recently began considering an ordinance to ban declawing in the city.

The legislation, Assembly Bill 395, inserts a ban into the state's veterinary medical practice act that will prohibit the declawing surgical procedures known as onychectomy and flexor tendonectomy. Onychectomy is a surgical procedure where the animal's toes or part of the paw are amputated at the last joint in order to remove the animal's claws. Bone and tendons are also severed. Flexor tendonectomy is an alternative procedure in which the tendons to an animal's toes are cut so that the claws cannot be extended.

"Most Californians who have declawed their cat have no idea what they put their pet through," said Assemblyman Koretz. "Declawing literally involves amputating part of the cat's paws and causes pain and discomfort. It is a cruel and inhumane procedure that is absolutely unnecessary. Instead, veterinarians should work to educate cat owners about the various alternatives that are available," said Koretz.

The practice of animal declawing is viewed by many veterinarians and animal experts as an act of cruelty. The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) has stated that "declawing is generally unacceptable because the suffering and disfigurement it causes is not offset by any benefits to the cat. Declawing is done strictly to provide convenience for people."

AB 395 also bans the declawing procedure for large and exotic cat species such as lions, tigers, cougars and bobcats. The effects of declawing are particularly debilitating for big cats. Declawing cripples these creatures, both from the pain caused by the bone fragments left behind, and from the progressively debilitating arthritis produced by abnormal stress on other joints as the cats try to avoid walking on their tender toes.

"The term 'declawing' is a misnomer," says veterinarian Dr. Jennifer Conrad. "It is actually an amputation of the last bone of the toe." Dr. Conrad, founder of the Paw Project, an organization dedicated to abolishment of declaw surgery, has seen many domestic and exotic cats crippled by this procedure. "Declawing is a painful and risky surgery performed primarily to protect sofas and drapes. It does not benefit the cat in any way. Declawing is rarely done in other parts of the world and is illegal in many countries. It's time for Californians to recognize and protect the interests and needs of their animals."

The bill will likely be heard in the Assembly Business and Professions Committee in late March or early April.

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